A

SERMON

Preach'd before the

Lord Mayor and Aldermen

At GUILDHALL-Chappel,

on *Palm-Sunday*, 1679.

And now publiſhed as it was then delivered.

By *SAMUEL JOHNSON*, a Miniſter of the Church of *England* as it is now by Law eſtabliſhed.

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THE
Epiſtle Dedicatory
TO THE
CLERGY.

Men, Brethren, and Fathers;

I *Preſume with all Humility, to offer this ſmall Diſcourſe, rather to* You, *than to any other* Patrons; *becauſe being levell'd againſt the Church of* Rome, *the implacable and mortal Enemy of the Proteſtant* Religion, *it is a Service to You in the firſt place; and therefore has an immediate right to Your Acceptance and Encouragement. The* Proteſtant Cauſe *againſt* Popery, *is a very Good*

Good One in it self; but besides, You have so many, and so strong Engagements to it, that whenever a Defence of it is recommended to Your Patronage, it comes to its Own, and therefore I hope will be received by You. It is a great part of the Doctrine of the Church of England, *to say, that we are not* Papists; *and very many of the thirty nine Articles are wholly spent in condemning and renouncing* (a) the Arrogant and Impious Doctrines; (b) The fond, and vain, and unwarrantable Inventions; (c) The blasphemous Fables, and dangerous Deceits *of that False Religion. I have endeavoured to justify that Doctrine of our Church, by giving some further Reasons, why we are not* Papists; *and by shewing, that we can never be made* Papists, *but by putting out the Eyes of the Nation.*

a) *Artic.* 14.
b) *Artic.* 22.
c) *Artic.* 31.

My Design both in the preaching this Sermon heretofore, *and in publishing it* now, *was partly, to prevent, as far as in me lay, the Ruine and Destruction of those many millions of Souls which are now your Charge; and will certainly perish, if ever they come under the Conduct of the blind Romish Guides: And partly, to free my self from the Blood of our miserable Posterity, which will undoubtedly be required of this Generation, if* Popery *return again in our Days, after it has been so long cast out.*

Popery

Popery *is the worſt Religion, or pretended Religion, in the whole World; for ſhe puts out the Underſtandings of thoſe of her own Communion, and tears out the Hearts of all others: whom ſhe cannot deceive, ſhe will deſtroy. Upon which account ſhe is the Common Enemy of Mankind, and of us in particular, whom ſhe has threatned with utter* Extirpation, *and has given it us under the Hand of her Secretary* Coleman. *Now I can as ſoon believe* Tranſubſtantiation *to be true, as believe that we are bound to encourage and aſſiſt her intended Cruelty againſt us, by meeting it half-way, and by vowing our ſelves Sacrifices to it. On the other hand; Unleſs we uſe our beſt Endeavours, both againſt* Popery, *and all thoſe treacherous Inlets which make a way for it, we do but mock God when we pray againſt it; and particularly, when we ſay that excellent Prayer againſt the Popes of* Rome, *which our own Church has put into our Mouths.*

The Lord of Heaven and Earth defend us from their Tyranny and Pride, that they never enter into his Vineyard again, to the diſturbance of his ſilly poor Flock: but that they may be utterly confounded and put to flight

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slight in all Parts of the World: and he of his great Mercy so work in all Mens Hearts, by the mighty Power of the Holy Ghost, that the comfortable Gospel of his Son CHRIST may be truly preached, truly received, and truly followed in all places, to the beating down of Sin, Death, the Pope, the Devil, and all the Kingdom of Antichrist, that like scattered and dispersed Sheep, being at length gathered into one Fold, We may in the end rest altogether in the Bosom of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, there to be partakers of Eternal and Everlasting Life, through the Merits and Death of Jesus Christ our Saviour. Amen.

S. Mat

S. *Mat.* 15. latter part of the 14*th* Verſe.

—*And if the Blind lead the Blind, they ſhall both of them fall into the Ditch.*

THeſe words are ſpoken of the *Scribes* and *Phariſees*, as appears plainly by the Context; who though they were perverſly and ſtupidly ignorant, yet undertook to be the *only Guides* and Inſtructors of the People: And they again were ſo ſimple and beſotted, as to put themſelves under their Conduct and Direction.

And now, what *good* can come of ſuch ſenſleſs Doings? Our Saviour here tells us what the Effect of it will be, *They ſhall both of them fall into the Ditch*, and ingulf themſelves together in Perdition. And this is *ſo certain*, that in another place, the 6*th*

of St. *Luke*, verſ. 39. He appeals to the common ſenſe of Mankind, whether this be not likely to prove the laſt iſſue of ſuch a courſe; He would fain know how it can be otherwiſe; *Can the Blind lead the Blind? ſhall they not both fall into the Ditch?*

In handling theſe words, I ſhall conſider;

I. Why our Saviour calls theſe Scribes and Phariſees, *blind Guides.*

II. Why he calls the People, their Followers, *blind.*

III. The *Danger* of both *Parties* engaged in this ſenſleſs Courſe.

I. Why our Saviour calls the Scribes and Phariſees, *blind Guides.*

And the Reaſons of it may be referr'd to theſe two Heads.

1. Becauſe their Doctrines were contrary to Reaſon and common Senſe. And

And therefore he often calls them *Fools* and *Blind.*

2. Becauſe they were contrary to the Holy Scriptures. *They made void the Commandments of God through their Traditions.*

1. Becauſe their Doctrines were contrary to Reaſon and common Senſe. What wiſe Heathen would not have ſcorn'd that idle Conceit, that waſhen Hands could contribute to a Man's inward Sanctity? And yet this was the ſtanding Tradition of the Elders, that none muſt *eat with unwaſhen Hands*; that ſo the Hands might not defile the Meat, nor the Meat the Man. And they were ſo careful to have this Practice duly obſerv'd, that they came on purpoſe to our Saviour, to complain of his Diſciples for their ſcandalous neglect in this Point, and to challenge him for ſuffering them in it: As you have a full account of it in the beginning of this Chapter; together with our Saviour's ſenſe of this out-ſide and ſuperficial Religion, which is ſo far from the Heart. And upon this occaſion it is, he *here* calls them *blind.*

Another Inſtance of this, was, their ſenſleſs diſtinctions about the Obligation of Oaths, St. *Matth.* 23. 16, 17. *Wo unto you, ye blind Guides, which ſay, Whoſoever ſhall ſwear by the Temple, it is nothing; but whoſoever ſhall ſwear by the Gold of the Temple, he is a Debtor*; *i. e.* bound to take care of his Oath, and make it good. *Ye Fools, and blind; for whether is greater, the Gold, or the Temple which ſanctifies the Gold?* Theſe were profound Caſuiſts indeed, to determine ſo awkardly and abſurdly, and quite the wrong way, in Subtilties of their own making.

2. Becauſe their Doctrines were contrary to the Holy Scriptures, they *made void the Commandments of God, through their Traditions.* Our Saviour ſhews us how they tranſgreſs'd the Fifth Commandment, and made it of none effect through their Tradition, in the 4*th* Verſe of this Chapter. And ſo he ſhews in other places, how they had evaded and eluded the other Commandments, by their falſe Gloſſes and Interpretations. They taught Men how to ſupplant Juſtice and Honeſty, by pretences of Piety; and to break

break the Tables of the Law one againſt another. They were very punctual in little Obſervances, about paying Tythe of Mint, Aniſe, and Cummin, which it is very diſputable whether God did command or no; but in the mean time, made no Conſcience of the more weighty and ſubſtantial things of the Law, Judgment, Mercy, and Faithfulneſs. Which makes our Saviour call them again, *blind Guides, which ſtrain at a Gnat, and ſwallow a Camel.* St. *Matth.* 23. verſ. 24.

II. And yet, in the ſecond place, theſe blind Guides were taken for no leſs than *Infallible*, by their blind and ignorant Followers. For they had ſwallowed down all their falſe and abſurd Doctrines, without any ſcruple or examination: *Inſomuch* that it was a great part of our Saviour's Buſineſs, both in his Sermon upon the Mount, and elſewhere, to undeceive them in theſe Matters. The People had captivated their Underſtandings and Belief to the Dictates of theſe Men, to ſuch a degree, that it was laid down as a Rule amongſt them, *That if*

R. Bechai. *a Scribe ſaid, their right Hand was their Left, they were bound to believe him.* The Scribes and Phariſees, it ſeems, had gain'd ſuch an abſolute Empire and Dominion over the Minds of the People, that they thought it their Duty, rather to diſtruſt their own Senſe and Reaſon, than what their Teachers delivered, though it were never ſo apparently falſe.

What has been ſaid concerning theſe Jews, with whom we are leſs concerned, is enough to put you in mind of certain Prieſts and People in the World, who exactly agree with this Character, and ſeem to inherit the very Spirit and Temper of theſe Men. And to be plain, it is in the Romiſh Religion where this *odd Scene* has been acted over again, and the Blind have led the Blind for ſeveral Ages together. The blind Guides of that Church, have affronted the Reaſon of Mankind, and voided the Holy Scriptures more effectually, than ever the Scribes and Phariſees did; and all their Dictates have been followed with as blind an Obedience by the People.

Firſt,

First, Their Doctrines and Traditions, as the Phariſees were, are contrary to Reaſon, and the common Senſe of Mankind. Prayer in an *unknown Tongue*, is certainly a moſt unreaſonable and contradictious thing. It is *making* their Requeſts *known* unto God, for that is the Engliſh of Prayer, when they do not know them *themſelves*. It is the performance of a reaſonable Act, without the help of the Underſtanding. In a word, It is the trueſt *Sacrifice of Fools*. Now, this is impoſed upon the generality of Chriſtians, as *C. Perronne* tell us, for Uniformity-ſake, that the Maſs may be ſaid alike in all places; That Latin may be kept up in the World, to prevent the ill ſounding of old and obſolete words in vulgar Tongues; and for ſuch-like Reaſons, which are as vain and ridiculous, as the practice which they are brought to juſtify. *Reply to K. James.*

The Doctrine of Merit and Supererrogation, is a falſe and inſolent Doctrine at the *firſt ſight*: whereby they teach, that our great Creator may be put into Debt, and owe vaſt Arrears to one of his own Creatures:

tures: That ſome particular Men may have goodneſs enough, and to ſpare; and may help out others with that *overplus*. And upon the Stock of theſe Merits, is raiſed the Fund of Roman Indulgences; whereby the Pope does make large Abatements of the Number of Men's Sins; and whereas they owe for Hundreds or Thouſands, can, with the unjuſt Steward, *bid them ſit down and write Fourſcore*.

It would be endleſs to rip up the Abſurdities of a Purgatory Fire, which is to *refine* Men's Souls; *Souls*, I ſay, for it is plain that their *Bodies* are then lying in the Grave. Of Auricular Confeſſion, where a Man unlades himſelf of all his Sins, by whiſpering them into the Prieſt's Ear. Of praying *to* Dead Men, which cannot hear us; and *for* Dead Men, which are paſt help. Of worſhipping Images, and expecting *great good* from them; concerning which, what *David* ſays, *Pſal.* 115.8. is the Verdict of meer natural Reaſon; *They that make them, are like unto them; and ſo are all they that put their truſt in them.* As very Stocks and Stones as what they worſhip.

Of

Of Tranſubſtantiation; where Men muſt renounce all their five Senſes at once, and where Abſurdities, Repugnancies, and utter Impoſſibilities lie upon heaps. A Doctrine that lies ſo croſs to a Man's Underſtanding, as if it were framed in *ſpight* to our reaſonable Faculties. But ſo much the better; for now we are able to *demonſtrate* the falſhood and impoſſibility of it; and if it had not been ſo *very abſurd*, it had been the harder to confute. But now, that it is ſo point-blank contrary to the moſt evident and certain Truths we have, either in the Mathematicks, or in Philoſophy, we are able to bring this Controverſy to a ſhort and ſpeedy iſſue. For if Tranſubſtantiation be true, it has the good luck to be the *only* Truth in the World, and there is never another beſide.

And after all, The Doctrine of the Pope's Infallibility, keeps a very good *decorum* with the reſt. For though he has, by his Authority, ſpread theſe falſe and abſurd Doctrines over a great part of the World; and though they ſeem to be very unreaſonable, yet they are really true, becauſe he that delivers

them, is out of a poſſibility of erring; He alone cannot err, and all others, without ſome of his aſſiſtance, cannot but err. But it is very hard to believe, that one ſingle Man in the World is *more* than a Man, and that all the reſt are *leſs* than Men. That if he place himſelf in his Chair, he cannot err if he would; and that others lie under as fatal a neceſſity of erring, if they be left to themſelves, without his guidance and direction. And it is *ſtill* the harder to believe it, becauſe theſe Oracles have been found contradicting each other. So that *beſides* their Infallibility, they muſt have another privilege beyond all other mortal Men, and that is, to *contradict* one another, and yet be *both* in the *right*.

Secondly, Their Traditions and Doctrines are contrary to the Holy Scriptures. Their Prayers, in an unknown Tongue, are directly contrary to the 14*th* Chapter of the firſt Epiſtle to the *Corinthians*. Their Worſhip of Images is ſo plain a breach of the Second Commandment, that themſelves ſeeing how irreconcileable they are, and that they

they cannot both ſtand together, have wiſely let ſlip that Commandment out of their Catechiſms. And ſo it were as eaſy to ſhew you concerning the reſt. The Sacramental Elements are called *Bread* and *Wine* in Scripture, even after Conſecration. But inſtead of particular Inſtances, the Infallibility, and ſole Prerogative of interpreting Scripture, is that which undermines the whole Goſpel all at once. For it makes the Scripture but a Stale, and gives the Pope's Interpretations all the Authority, which of right belongs to the Scripture. So that as *Bellarmine* ſays, If the Pope call Vertue, Vice; or Vice, Vertue, he is to be believed and obeyed. And this indeed is a ſhort and compendious way, of making all the Commandments of God of none effect; for Men muſt obſerve them no longer, than the Biſhop of *Rome* thinks fit. And thus much for the firſt thing, which was, to ſhew how contrary the Doctrines of the Romiſh Prieſts are both to Scripture and Reaſon; and conſequently, that they have as much right to that Title of *blind Guides*, or more, than ever the Scribes and Phariſees had.

The ſecond Thing is to ſhew you, That they are attended by as blind and ignorant Followers. And this is notorious to the World; for Ignorance is induſtriouſly cheriſh'd among the common People, to make them the better Catholicks; according to that Proverb, which has been a long time currant among them, that *Ignorance is the Mother of Devotion.* There is a kind of Contract of Error made betwixt them; The Clergy are loth to have the People examine Things; and the People, on the other ſide, are as ready to take Things upon truſt, that they may not be at the pains of examining: And ſo they have right the Nuncio's Bleſſing, *Si Populus vult decipi, decipiatur*, If the People are willing to be deceived, let them.

Nay, they have enſlaved themſelves to ſuch Principles, as will for ever keep them low and ignorant, and which cut off all enquiry after Truth. For they are made to believe, that it is a *mortal Sin* to doubt of any part of their Religion: And then it is another mortal Sin, not to confeſs *this* to the Prieſt; who queſtionleſs will take care

to

to keep them from ſtaggering, and *effectually* prevent their Apoſtacy from the Church.

The Holy Scripture, which is the beſt means of inſtructing them better, is either lock'd up from them in an unknown Tongue, or at leaſt the free uſe of it is denied to them. And yet they take this Injury ſo patiently, that moſt of them are really and heartily perſwaded that it is for their *good*, and that they are thereby the farther removed from all danger of falling into Hereſy.

They content themſelves with that ſhort Creed, To believe as the Church believes; with an implicit Faith, that is, with a Belief in another's keeping. Or as Cardinal *Perrone* explains the thing, It is to believe with the Faith of the Church, or adhere to the Church which believes ſuch things: By the Faith of which Church, ſays he, they live, as long as they continue in its Communion; as Children live by the Nouriſhment of the Mother, all the while they are in her Womb. Which is the fitteſt reſemblance in Nature that can be found out for them. *In his Letter to* Caſaubon.

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By virtue of this Faith, all the Embrioes of that Religion do believe, that all these absurd Doctrines are contained in Scripture. Nay that *Transubstantiation it self* is in the Apostles Creed. For the *Trent* Catechism says expresly, That it is not lawful for any of the Faithful to doubt, but it is comprehended in these two Articles; **I believe in God the Father Almighty,** and **I believe in the Holy Catholick Church. The Father Almighty is able to effect and bring it to pass, and the Holy Catholick Church tells us, he does effect and bring it to pass:** and there it is. Now if this be not blind Belief, I would fain know what is.

De Sacram. Eucharistiæ. Sect. 25.

III. The third thing I propounded was, to shew you the *Danger* of *both Parties* engaged in this senseless course; *If the* Blind *lead the* Blind, *they shall both fall into the Ditch.* And I shall chuse this way to do it.

First, By laying open before you what a great Fault it is in the *Priests.*

Secondly,

Secondly, In the *People*. And then your ſelves may eaſily judg of the Danger.

Firſt, What a great Fault it is in the *Prieſts*.

And that (1.) in advancing Doctrines contrary to Reaſon and common Senſe; whereby they go about, as much as in them lies, to extinguiſh that great Light which God has ſet up to enlighten every Man that comes into the World. Reaſon is the only thing we have to truſt to, in the laſt iſſue and reſult of things. And our very belief of Divine Revelations, muſt finally be reſolved into it: Or elſe we ſhall very ill comply with St. *Peter's* Advice, *to be ready to render a Reaſon of the hope that is in us.* It is that which lays in us the Foundation of all Religion, I mean, a true Notion of God; It teaches us due apprehenſions of him, and to conceive rightly concerning him. It inſtructs us, that we received our Being, and all our Faculties from him, that we cannot be deceived by them, in thoſe things which we evidently and diſtinctly perceive; and

and that to think otherwiſe, would be to reflect upon God. Nay, it teaches us, that Omnipotence it ſelf cannot make a clear Conception to be falſe: It can indeed make ſomething out of nothing, but it cannot make ſomething to be nothing.

Theſe, and ſuch-like Principles of Reaſon, are the Rock upon which all Religion ſtands; and if any Man will go wiſely and orderly to Work, he muſt be ſatisfied in theſe things, before he can think of Revelation. As for our Reaſonable Faculties, we know whence we had them, and are aſſured that God has ſpoken to us by them: But as for any Revelation, we know not whence it is, till we have tried and examined it. Till we ſee how it agrees with our natural Notices of God, till we find that it is worthy of God, and becoming his Holineſs, Wiſdom, Goodneſs, and Truth: for then it bears God's Mark and Superſcription upon it, and carries along with it one great Evidence, that it came forth from God. When a revealed Religion, and the Reaſon of Mankind, do perfectly correſpond, and bear Witneſs to one another, it is a ſign

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they both proceed from one Author, and were both given us by the ſame Hand. If a Doctrine, which pretends to come from God, does teach us over again the firſt Principles of our Creation, and the Eternal Laws of Heaven and Earth, and nothing at all contrary to them, who can reaſonably doubt but this is the very Mind and Will of him who made the World?

However, this is an undeniable Conſequence on the other hand; if any pretended Revelation contain in it things contrary to Reaſon, ſuch as we are able to prove falſe, it cannot come from God, it is immediatly convicted of Fraud and Impoſture. For whatſoever is falſe in Philoſophy, can never be true in Divinity. If natural and ſupernatural Truths could be ſuppoſed to croſs one another, we ſhould be bound to Contradictions and Impoſſibilities, we ſhould be engaged at once to believe and disbelieve the ſame things; and in the ſelf-ſame inſtance, to act both as reaſonable, and unreaſonable Creatures.

Therefore when Men firſt teach what is contrary to Reaſon, and then vilify and diſ-

parage it, as that which *ſavours not the things which be of God*, as that which is *pur-blind*, and ſees little or nothing in Matters of Religion, as that which is *ſtark blind*, and ſees nothing at all; What do they, but undermine the Foundations of all Religion, and eclipſe that *common Light* which diſcovers God to the World, and that bright Star which leads all Wiſe Men to Chriſt; and, in a word, take the ready way, not to leave a Chriſtian, or a reaſonable Man, in the World?

2. It is likewiſe a great Fault, to teach Doctrines contrary to the Holy Scripture. For it is to unteach the People what God has taught them; It is to ſet them free from thoſe Obligations which God has laid upon them, and to make them the Servants of Men: It is the preſumptuous entitling of God to their own Errors and Falſhoods, and ſaying, *the Lord hath ſpoken it*; when he never ſaid it, neither did it ever come into his mind.

It is an unſpeakable Injury to our Bleſſed Saviour, to miſrepreſent his Holy Goſpel, and to make him be thought the Author of

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an abſurd, and ſenſleſs, and looſe, and cruel Religion. It is enough to alienate the minds of thoſe, who only know Popery, and the dark ſide of our Religion, from Chriſtianity it ſelf; and to make them take up the Reſolution of *Averroes*, *Quandoquidem Chriſtiani adorant quod comedunt, ſit anima mea cum Philoſophis.* As long as the Chriſtians worſhip what they eat, let my Soul be with the Philoſophers.

It deceives Men in Matters of the greateſt Conſequence, in the weighty Concerns of their Soul, and of Eternity; wherein, of all other things, it is the moſt horrid and barbarous to impoſe upon them. In a word, It is the ſhrewdeſt ill turn, under pretence of the greateſt Charity; it is deſtroying Men, in the way of making them happy; it is poiſoning the Sacrament, and it is the Blood of Souls.

And the badneſs of this practice will further appear, by conſidering the Motives which draw Men to it. And in ſome Points of Popery, it is viſible that it is *Covetouſneſs, making merchandiſe* of Souls *for filthy Lucre ſake.* And indeed, no Gain can be ſo *foul*

and *diſhoneſt*, as that for which Men ſell Truth, and the everlaſting Intereſts of Men.

In other Points, the Motive is *Reputation*; which is ſo plain in the Doctrine of Tranſubſtantiation, that one of their own Writers, cannot forbear enlarging upon the great Honour which it derives upon the Clergy, by giving them *ſuch a Privilege, as if all the learned Clerks, that ever lived ſince the beginning of the World, ſhould have ſtudied to raiſe, advance, and magnify ſome one State of Men to the higheſt pitch of Reverence and Eminency, they could never (without ſpecial Light from Heaven) have thought of any thing comparable to this.* That is, they can make their Maker: *Sacerdos eſt Creator ſui Creatoris.*

Ruſhw. *Dial.* 1. *Sect.* 4. Another ſays, the Prieſt has hereby the Honour of being the Father of Chriſt, whom he has begotten in the Sacrament. *See this, with much other Blaſphemy, in* Andr. Rivet, *Explic. Decal.* P. 1364.

The Sweets of Government, and the extream and accurſed Pleaſure of having a Spiritual Dominion, and reigning over the Minds and Belief of Men, ſeems to be the Original of other Points, as namely, Infallibility and Confeſſion.

It is much to be feared, that Ambition, Secular Profit and Advantages, that the

God

God of this World has blinded their Eyes in these, and many other Particulars. I know, they plead Councils, and Fathers, and uninterrupted Tradition, in behalf of their Doctrines: but with so little probability, that it may put us in mind of what *Polybius* says concerning the declaring of War; That one Reason is given out, but generally that which is concealed is the true Reason.

However, we are sure, that if such worldly Considerations do not blind their Eyes, and byas their Understandings; Yet want of considering and examining things freely and impartially, is a Fault, of which they will never be able to acquit themselves. And that's Crime enough for a Man to bury his Reason alive, and hide his Talent in a Napkin, because he will not be at the pains of improving it. It is an unpardonable slighting of Heaven, and of the right way thither; as if they were not worthy of their enquiry after them, and is sufficient to destroy, both themselves and them that hear them. Who are likewise,

Secondly,

Secondly, In great Danger, if we conſider what a great Fault it is in them, to follow their blind Guides with a blind Belief and Obedience.

1. In Doctrines which are contrary to Reaſon and common Senſe. This muſt be the worſe, becauſe a Man cannot do it without ſome reluctancy, and without offering violence to his own mind. We are apt to have very uncomfortable thoughts of the Heathen World, as ſitting in Darkneſs, and in the ſhadow of Death; but Men that yield up their Belief to the Dictates of others, betray themſelves into a worſe condition; they expoſe themſelves to greater Errors than ever the Heathens were guilty of; of which the ſingle Doctrine of Tranſubſtantiation will ſerve for a thouſand Inſtances: And not only ſo, but they put it out of their power ever to correct their Errors, and lie wholly at the *mercy* of another.

Mahomet requires no more than this tractable Principle, to keep Men Turks and good Muſſel-men, for this will for ever reconcile them to all the abſurd and bloody Doctrines of the *Alcoran*. In the 32 *Azoara* of

of which Book, he cautions his Followers not to enter into Debate about their Religion, nor to argue for it; but if any one offer to diſpute with them, to ſay, *That God ſhall diſcuſs all Controverſies in the Day of Judgment: which it is as eaſy for him to do, as if it lay written before him in a Book, ſeeing all things are his.* And in another place he ſays, *That no Body underſtands the Alcoran, but God alone; but they that have the depth of Wiſdom, ſay of it, We believe it, for all of it comes from our good God.* And if they be true to theſe Principles, it is utterly impoſſible to bring Men over from that ſenſleſs and barbarous Religion, or ever to put them out of conceit with it.

And beſides, this temper not only expoſes Men to the belief of the greateſt Cheats and Impoſtures in Religion, but likewiſe is a folly, which admits of *no manner* of defence or excuſe. Why did God give every Man a Conſcience of his own, if he were to be guided and directed by another Man's Conſcience, and not his own? It is the Birth-right of Mankind to be govern'd by their own Reaſon in their ſenſe of Religion,

gion, and as to their inward belief; but these Men part with it upon cheaper terms, than prophane *Esau* sold his, and fairly renounce it at a Priest's bidding.

Where should Men use their Reason and Understanding most, but in Matters of the greatest Moment? and such without controversy Religion is. Did God endow us with these Divine Faculties, only to measure Lines and Angles, or to learn Trades, or to drive Bargains? We may as well say, that he created the Sun to save Candle. No, he bestowed them upon us for nobler and higher Purposes; that we might know Him and know our selves, what Relation we have to him, and what Service we owe him; that we might distinguish betwixt True and False, Right and Wrong, and might be able to think and act as becomes reasonable Creatures. And those that commit these precious Talents to another's keeping, are like to give but a very ill account of them.

2. In Doctrines which are contrary to the Holy Scripture. Here the People may more easily be abused than before, and be

be miſled without being aware of it: becauſe the Inſtitutions of Revealed Religion are not ſo well known, nor ſo obvious to Men, as the Dictates of Nature. But the Prieſts very forbidding the People to read the Scripture, gives them a juſt ſuſpicion that they *are abuſed*, and would make any conſiderate Man the more eager to examine whether the things they teach be ſo or no. For which the generous *Beræans* are commended in Scripture, who would not take the Apoſtle's bare word, but ſearch'd the Scriptures themſelves.

If any Doctrine decline Trial, it is a great Argument againſt it; for Truth loſes nothing by being brought to the Teſt. If any Religion be too good to be examined, it is too bad to be believed.

Men would not be thus tamely cheated in Worldly Matters; they will not buy, or bargain, at this blind rate: and therefore it is a ſign that they leſs care what becomes of their Souls, than of their Mony and Eſtates.

So that in the laſt place, this Temper reſolves it ſelf into a great indifferency and unconcernedneſs about Religion, which ought to be our firſt and chief care. It proceeds from a brutiſh degeneracy of mind, which makes Men content to be like the Horſe and Mule, which have no underſtanding. It has in it all the bad Ingredients of Sloth and Negligence; of Folly, and Credulity, and Irreligion. And I am ſure there can be no ſafety in ſuch a ſtate of mind; for it is far from Truth, and far from God.

We may take occaſion, from what has been ſaid, to thank God that it is otherwiſe with us. For who has made the difference? This was the Caſe of our Forefathers, in the dark and long Night of Popery. Bleſſed be God that it is not ours.

2. Let us ſtand faſt in that Liberty wherewith God has made us free, and never ſuffer our Souls to be brought into Bondage to any Man, whatever becomes of our Bodies.

3. Let

3. Let us heartily pitty, and as we are able, ſeek the recovery of thoſe that are in this bad condition.

4. Let us take a ſpecial care to live up to that Knowledg which God has given us: otherwiſe we have but little reaſon to pity them, they are in a better condition than we. Let us think often of thoſe words of our Saviour, St. *John* 9. the laſt Verſe, *Jeſus ſaid unto them, If ye were blind, ye ſhould have no Sin*, that is, none in compariſon; your Sin would be the leſs: *But now ye ſay, we ſee, therefore your Sin remaineth*, and will be the harder to wipe out.

Theſe things require more enlargement than the time will bear, I ſhall therefore leave them, as they are, to your own Conſideration.

FINIS.